

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4959

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, TU, GR
SUBJECT: GREEK VIEWS ON TURKISH ELECTIONS

1. ALTHOUGH THE JUNE 5 TURKISH ELECTIONS HAVE NOT ATTRACTED WIDESPREAD PUBLIC ATTENTION IN THE GREEK MEDIA, THERE IS, OBVIOUSLY, CONSIDERABLE INTEREST HERE ON THE OUTCOME. MOREOVER, THE PRESS HAS BEEN QUICK TO PUBLICIZE REPORTS ABOUT THE PERIODIC INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AND TO CALL ATTENTION TO VARIOUS CAMPAIGN STATEMENTS BY THE CANDIDATES ON ISSUES OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO GREECE (I.E. CYPRUS AND THE AEGEAN). THIS PAST WEEK, FOR EXAMPLE, THE PRESS PICKED UP THE REMARKS OF DEMIREL AND ECEVIT CONCERNING THE GREEK ISLANDS OF THE AEGEAN CARRIED IN THE SPECIAL MAY 23 INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE SUPPLEMENT ON TURKEY, AND ERBAKAN'S "GORDIAN KNOT" STATEMENT ON CYPRUS.

2. THE PRINCIPLE GREEK CONCERN IN CONNECTION WITH THE TURKISH ELECTIONS IS THAT THEY PRODUCE A STRONG TURKISH GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, MOST INFORMED GREEKS FEAR THAT NEITHER OF THE TWO PRINCIPAL PARTIES WILL GAIN A MAJORITY AND
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THAT ANOTHER COALITION GOVERNMENT, WITH WEAKNESSESS SIMILAR TO THOSE OF THE PRESENT ONE, WILL RESULT. FOR MONTHS NOW THE GREEKS HAVE BEEN MAINTAINING THAT THE GOT DECISION-MAKING PROCESS WAS IN EFFECT PARALYZED BY THE WEAKNESSES OF THE DEMIREL COALITION AND NOTHING WOULD BE EXPECTED IN TERMS OF PROGRESS TOWARD A CYPRUS SETTLEMENT OR RESOLUTION OF THE AEGEAN DISPUTE UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

3. THE GOG HAS MAINTAINED A CAREFUL OFFICIAL SILENCE ON THE ELECTIONS AND VOIDED ANY STATEMENTS THAT MIGHT BE CONSTRUED AS POSSIBLE INTERFERENCE IN WHAT IS REGARDED AS A CLEARLY TURKISH INTERNAL AFFAIR. NOR HAS THE GOG INDICATED ANY PREFERENCE FOR EITHER OF THE TWO PRINCIPAL CANDIDATES. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, SOME GREEKS HAVE DEFINITE VIEWS AS TO WHICH CANDIDATE WOULD, IF ELECTED, BEST SERVE GREEK INTERESTS. ON ONE CANDIDATE, NATIONAL SALVATION PARTY LEADER ERBAKAN, THERE IS GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT HE IS BAD NEWS AND WILL, HOPEFULLY, BE EXCLUDED FROM ANY FUTURE COALITION.

4. IN COMPARING DEMIREL AND ECEVIT, MOST INFORMED GREEKS ARGUE ALONG THE FOLLOWING LINES. THOSE WHO SEE DEMIREL AS MORE LIKELY TO SERVE GREEK INTERESTS (AND THEY SEEM TO BE THE LARGER NUMBER) ARGUE THAT SEVERAL FACTORS ARE IN HIS FAVOR: (A) EMOTIONALLY THEY CHOOSE HIM OVER ECEVIT BECAUSE HE WAS NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE 1974 CYPRUS INVASION; (B) THEY SEE HIM AS A KNOWN QUANTITY, A PRUDENT LEADER MORE INCLINED THAN HIS RIVAL TO SEEK RATIONAL SOLUTIONS TO GREEK-TURKISH PROBLEMS; (C) THEY CALCULATE THAT DEMIREL HAS A BETTER CHANCE OF FORMING A GOVERNMENT EXCLUDING ERBAKAN, AND (D) ESPECIALLY TO CONSERVATIVE GREEKS, ECEVIT IS SEEN AS THE "SOCIALIST POET" WHOM IN MANY WAYS THEY LIKEN TO THE INTEMPERATE GREEK OPPOSITION LEADER ANDREAS PAPANDREOU.

5. ON THE OTHER HAND, THERE ARE OTHER GREEKS WHO CONTEND THAT AN ECEVIT VICTORY WOULD BE BETTER. WHILE ECEVIT HAS THE IMAGE OF BEING A LEFTIST, AND, MORE IMPORTANT FROM THE GREEK PERSPECTIVE, CONFIDENTIAL

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HAS SPOKEN UP AS A HARDLINER ON AEGEAN ISSUES, THEY MAINTAIN, NEVERTHELESS, THAT IN THE LONG RUN HIS ELECTION IS MORE LIKELY TO FAVOR GREEK INTERESTS. THEIR ARGUMENT IS BASED ON THE FACT ECEVIT WAS IN POWER WHEN TURKEY INVADED CYPRUS IN 1974 WHICH ALLOWS HIM GREATER LEEWAY TO MAKE THE NECESSARY CONCESSIONS FOR A CYPRUS SETTLEMENT. MOREOVER, THE GREEKS FAVORING ECEVIT CONTEND HE IS "WESTERNIZED," STRESSING HIS WEST EUROPEAN CULTURAL ORIENTATION. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS, HOWEVER, THE GREEKS WOULD PROBABLY FIND THE ELECTION OF EITHER DEMIREL OR ECEVIT ACCEPTABLE PROVIDED HE WON A MAJORITY AND COULD THUS FORM A GOVERNMENT CAPABLE OF MAKING DECISIONS AND REACHING AGREEMENT ON CYPRUS AND THE AEGEAN. KUBISCH

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